

News Release

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For Release: October 5, 2011
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BINWRC-11-02

Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge To Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week at Annual Open House on October 15

Time to dust off your hiking boots, break out the rain gear, and find those binoculars ... National Wildlife Refuge Week and the annual Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge open house are coming soon! Reservations are now being accepted for the nineteenth annual open house on Saturday, October 15.

Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge was established on October 29, 1985 to preserve rare native forest species. Residents and visitors are invited to hike through the Pua „Ākala Tract, which harbors a high-elevation rainforest, many native birds such as „i„iwi and „elepaio, and significant numbers of endangered species including the Hawai„i creeper and Hawai„i „akepa. Reforestation efforts have been supported for many years by volunteers from Hawaii and around the nation. Greenhouse tours are provided and a historic 115-year old koa cabin also will be open for viewing.

“The Refuge has been opening its gates to the public in celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week for 19 years now. This is our annual opportunity to welcome visitors to Hakalau Forest,” said Refuge Manager Jim Kraus. “My staff and I look forward to sharing the beauty and value of this native Hawaiian rainforest with its owners, the American people. It’s a wonderful opportunity to see our unique and colorful Hawaiian forest birds, the koa reforestation efforts and many rare plant species. Hakalau provides a secure habitat for many threatened and endangered species found only on the Big Island of Hawai„i.”

Visitors will be met by refuge staff and tour leaders at the Pua „Ākala barn beginning at 9 a.m. They will receive a briefing on refuge management objectives and strategies and a description of the plants and animals the Refuge protects. Rainforest hikes of varying lengths will be offered. The hikes will be led by biologists and staff familiar with native Hawaiian flora and fauna. Cultural resource protection, weed control projects, tree-planting efforts and the University of Hawai„i’s field station will also be highlighted.

The Friends of Hakalau Forest NWR will be hosting an “early bird” guided birding tour as a fundraiser this year. The tour will be held in conjunction with the refuge’s Open House but will leave the Pua „Ākala barn at 8:30 a.m. which is ½ hour before the refuge gates are opened to the general public. The Friends tour group will hike to the bottom of Pua „Ākala Road, a couple miles farther than the portion the general public can access. Groups will remain on and in the vicinity of the bottom portion of the road for as long as they like provided they return to the barn by 3:00 p.m. Cost is \$50 per person for members of Friends of Hakalau Forest. Non-members will be charged an additional \$25 to cover their cost of membership for one year. For more information and to sign up for the special tour, please send an email to friendsofhakalauforest@gmail.com.

Participants must arrange their own transportation to the refuge. A four-wheel-drive vehicle is required for the two-hour drive from Hilo, Waimea, or Kona.

“Families with children are welcome but be prepared for a long rough ride, rugged terrain, and primitive facilities,” said Kraus. Visitors should come prepared for wet chilly weather and bring their own lunch, water, binoculars, and rain gear. Pets are not allowed. Admission to the refuge is free, but reservations are required and may be obtained by calling the refuge office in Hilo at 443-2300 by October 13. Directions and additional information will be emailed to all participants.

Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge consists of 32,730 acres of native forest and grassland on the windward slope of Mauna Kea and 5,300 acres of forest on the leeward slope of Mauna Loa. The refuge was established on October 29, 1985, to protect and manage endangered forest birds and their habitat. It contains some of the finest stands of koa-,ohi,a forest remaining in the state.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>

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